

A bundle of dreams

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Engineers aside, former managing director of Commodore's trendsetting UK division, David Pleasance, did as much - if not more - than anyone to elevate the Amiga to the dizzying heights of earning the world's most popular 16-bit computer trophy... that's a *metaphorical* trophy I should add; there *was* no trophy. A shocking miscarriage of justice I know!

Entering the business as a humble salesman, he went on to *lead* the sales and marketing team, and within a decade rose through the ranks to MD, curtailed a hair's breadth away from orchestrating the management buyout - along with Colin Proudfoot - that would have saved the Amiga brand from falling into the grubby mitts of a parade of soulless corporate vultures. The deal turned sour at the 11th hour through no fault of his own, and the rest is his... has been eradicated from my grey matter by way of ECT.

Commodore rubs SEGA's nose in it

Despite enjoying healthy sales for their own MegaCD CD-based console, SEGA bosses have looked decidedly twitchy whenever the CD32 is mentioned.

As if it weren't enough for Commodore to produce the best and most exciting CD console in the world, they even decided to ram the message home with a message aimed squarely at SEGA's European corporate headquarters.

In a piece of unrivalled pre-Christmas humour, Commodore managed to book the massive billboard sign outside SEGA's HQ. They used it to run a CD32 ad which parodies SEGA's 'To be this good takes...' magazine and television adverts.

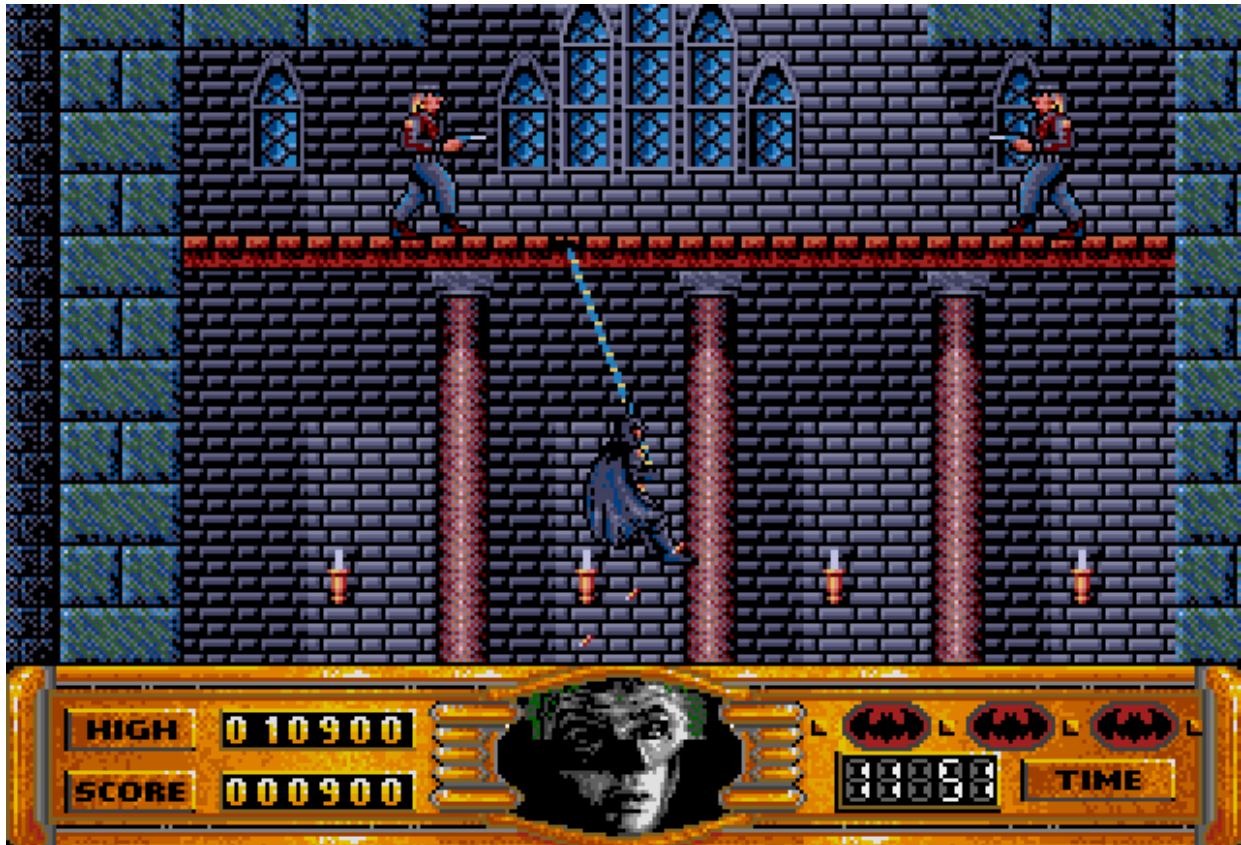
Although the reaction of SEGA's Managers is not available for the record, an unconfirmed source yesterday reported that a mystery bidder had purchased the billboard site for the next 200 years.

Go on, guess whose brainwave this was! CU Amiga issue 48, February 1994.



One of David's most significant achievements was popularising the concept of the home computer 'pack'; a means of marrying desirable hardware and software in themed retail bundles to offer the consumer a more rounded value for money experience upon purchasing a new system. As cheesy and glib as it sounds in today's irreverent, cynical milieu, he genuinely believed it when he declared, "we don't sell computers - we sell dreams".

These illustrious bundles were first introduced to sell the Commodore 64, though without a doubt the most successful was the Amiga 500 'Batman pack', which included the title game to tie in with the 1989 smash hit movie, in addition to the classic Taito arcade conversion, New Zealand Story, highly regarded flight simulator, F/A-18 Interceptor, and the leading graphics design tool, Deluxe Paint II.



Commodore capture Batman

Commodore have come up with a stunning bundling deal for the A500, which should see it storm into the Christmas shopping boom on a new high. Ocean's new game, Batman the Movie, will be launched simultaneously as both a separate release and as part of the A500 bundle.

It's the first time that a major game, which is bound to chart extremely well, has been bundled and launched at the same time.

That's not all that the 'Batman Pack' contains, either. There are three other pieces of software to add to the value of the pack and every one is a winner. As well as Batman, Ocean have put in The New Zealand Story,

an extremely addictive and hugely enjoyable coin-op conversion that received a Format Gold award in Issue One as well as featuring in a playable demo form on that month's Coverdisk.

Electronic Arts are also contributing a great deal to the bundle, with Deluxe Paint II and Interceptor. Although it is not the most recent version of Deluxe Paint, Version II is an excellent art program that will show off to new A500 owners just what an Amiga can do.

The second EA program is Interceptor, a game that amazed both reviewers and public alike when it came out. It's a flight simulator that concentrates heavily on the graphics and gameplay to create a game that is superb in demo mode, and even better in play. Other games have caught up with it now, but it is still mightily impressive. This may all sound a little over the top, but this bundle has everything going for it - except maybe a music program. At £399.99 we are bound to see these fly off the shelves and the ranks of A500 owners swell dramatically.

It's also interesting to note that the good ol' C64 has a new bundle as well containing a light gun, 3D glasses, games, quiz, music and paint software - even a typing tutor and audio help tape. All for £149.99. It's nice to see there's life in the old thing yet.

**Amiga Format breaks the tidings of comfort and joy
in issue 4 (November 1989)**



Before the headlining Batman game was complete, David approached Ocean's development director, Gary Bracey, to forge a deal which would ensure the Ocean brand and the Batman license would forever be synonymous with the Amiga. His intention was to convince Gary to grant him the exclusive rights to sell his game alongside the Commodore hardware for two months, whilst primarily only committing to purchase 10,000 units. Somehow - possibly invoking black magic persuasion techniques - David secured a deal that Ocean wouldn't regret for a second - they went on to sell many times more units than they ever dreamed possible.



Holy Bat-targets!

As Commodore launched the Batman Pack on the Wednesday morning of the show, an optimistic sales gentleman announced to the assembled press that the firm hoped to sell 100,000 of the packs over the Christmas period. Somewhere in the audience Steve Franklin, Commodore UK's MD, was blinking furiously and, perhaps, grinning inwardly.

"Well, he's set his own targets now" says Steve later on, chuckling merrily. Steve's own, more realistic estimate is that the Batman pack will sell 60-70,000 Amiga 500s. Still, by any judgement, a massive number.

"I really do believe this is going to be the Amiga's year" says Steve, and it isn't hard to believe. While the Amiga has always been, in his words, "The machine everyone wants", it has kept a niche for itself at the top end of the home computer scene, perhaps an ideal rather than an affordable reality for many people. So though sales were always good, the Amiga has never had a truly massive user base. All that is set to change.

In the year to June 1989, 80-85,000 Amigas were sold. Since then - in just a few months - another 25-30,000 have been bought, bringing the user base up into the region of 150,000 machines: and with the Batman Pack's prospects, the figures can only accelerate. "The Amiga is now the machine to have" says Steve Franklin. And he's right.

But what happens to the Batman Pack after Christmas, when the Batconcept is no longer the "something of the moment" that Steve and his team chose? Well, we have hopes of something exciting for the middle of next year: not just another pack, but something much more fundamental to the Amiga. "New hardware?" we ask. Steve Franklin is careful to reveal nothing more, but he stresses that Commodore will never produce any upgrade that the basic 500 user will not have access to. Sounds good for the New Year: the year of the Amiga?

Amiga Format anticipated a promising future for our beloved machine (issue 5, December 1989)



David's careful selections were designed to be aspirational in that you were encouraged to explore the potential offered by creative, productivity software. You might initially have been entranced by the current zeitgeisty movie license game, yet propelled through experimentation to become a digital artist, musician or writer. He nudged the tools under your fingertips, the rest was up to you.

...well that, or it was a cunning way to convince parents to part with £400 of their hard-earn cash under the misguided illusion that they were investing in an education facilitation device. In light of the number of kids my age who grew up to become comprehensively IT-literate employees, perhaps they weren't led down the garden path after all.

Thanks to a prominent TV promotional campaign voiced by everyone's favourite loveable toff, Stephen Fry, that dangled the chance to win one of ten Amiga 500 Batman packs, and through negotiating deals with all the UK's major high street

retailers, David ensured the system enjoyed maximum exposure, and found its way under 186,000 Christmas trees in 1989. The first affordable Amiga home computer went on to shift 6 million units worldwide!

Many inventive twists on the concept followed and some retailers - Silica for example - even got on board by creating their own bundles. David forged ahead, reprising this marketing miracle in the US, creating a number of new region-specific bundles for the A1200 in the process.

What's interesting is the way David's conjuring tricks were reported in the Amiga press at the time. Very often the credit would be attributed to his boss, MD Steve Franklin, who in fact only begrudgingly flashed the green light that allowed him to run with his plan on the proviso that he'd be shown the door if the Batarang misfired.



Change at the top at Commodore

In a surprise move, Commodore UK's managing director of many year's standing, Steve Franklin, is leaving his job to head up the European marketing effort on CDTV.

Steve Franklin is the man who assured much of the Amiga 500's success in this country with his policy of putting the Amiga into high-quality packs based around a big-name game. The first was the Batman pack and the most recent was the Cartoon Classics pack based around cult characters Bart Simpson and Captain Planet.

In between should have come the infamous Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, but that deal fell through. All the same, keying in on the top young people's entertainment characters has been a successful policy for the Amiga and is expected to continue this year with a new A600 pack.

Steve Franklin leaves to head up the European marketing effort on CDTV.

Kelly Sumner, who takes over as Commodore's managing director, is a favourite of the UK leisure computing industry and comes from the leisure side of Commodore's UK business, which should ensure that the Amiga will remain the company's main priority in this country. And that's certainly good news for all Amiga owners.

Who did what now? Amiga Format covers Steve's sideways career move in issue 37 (August 1992)

Not known for his ability to win friends and influence people, Steve, when he first accepted the top-flight position opted to sack all the business systems staff except for the man responsible for the educational ventures, and David, because he knew too much and couldn't easily be replaced overnight with one of his own flunkies.

Despite Commodore's untimely demise, David's career went from strength to strength, and reassuringly, he remains to this day a driving force in Amiga's ongoing legacy.

You can also catch him reminiscing on the launch of the CD32, and the caped crusader's dalliance with the Amiga in the recently unveiled 'From Bedrooms to Billions: The Amiga Years' documentary.